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# THE ENGLISH LEAFLET

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ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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GEORGE H. BROWNE, PRESIDENT

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*Editorial correspondence should be sent to the Editor, Charles Swain Thomas, at Newtonville, Mass.; business correspondence should be sent to the Secretary-Treasurer, F. W. C. Hersey, at 17 Lawrence Hall, Cambridge, Mass.*

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## MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS IN SCHOOL

ELIZABETH A. DYKE

The Winsor School, Boston

The use made of magazines and newspapers in my class in The Winsor School is not extensive or elaborate; it is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

The class is made up of fourteen girls, seniors not preparing for college. As there is a special division for weaklings, there are no very dull or lazy pupils; in the main, the girls are anxious to get as much as possible out of their last year at school, and are willing to learn pretty long lessons if the work seems valuable. Of the forty-eight recitations, set aside, during the year, for English—that is for composition and rhetoric, as distinguished from literature, six have been given exclusively to the study of magazines and newspapers and about four to current events. Most of these recitations have formed a part of the regular work in "orals."

The work done has been somewhat as follows:—

1. One morning was given to the study of a Boston daily newspaper—this year to the study of "war news." The object of this lesson was to familiarize the girls with the various departments and features of a newspaper, to show them where to look for information of different kinds so that they might read newspapers swiftly and intelligently, and to suggest to them the possibility of a critical attitude toward printed matter. Each girl was furnished with an outline containing a list of the topics which the class was to look up. Some of the topics assigned were:—sentence summaries of the news, complete summaries, official reports,

detailed accounts, editorials, correspondence, maps, pictures, etc. In addition there were such topics as accuracy and completeness, fairness and sensationalism. With these topics in mind each girl, examined the paper chosen and wrote out a report in her Harvard note-book, making a report on each topic, and illustrating this by clippings pasted in her note-book. The whole formed a sort of scrap-book, with the girls' opinions on sensationalism, fairness — or whatever the topic was — amply illustrated by clippings. In the recitation several girls gave orals on their newspapers, reading bits of what they had written and selections from the clippings in their note-books. As each girl recited, the other members of the class took notes on the newspaper under discussion — if it was one that they had not studied. After the different orals there was a general discussion of the relative merits and defects of the various newspapers.

II, A little later in the year a similar exercise was assigned on the weekly newspapers, each girl studying one paper and making another scrap-book report. The following papers, in most cases suggested by the girls themselves, were studied:—The (N. Y.) Nation, The Outlook, The New Republic, The London Illustrated News, The London (Weekly) Times, and Punch. Some of the comments on the war news in the English papers and on England's attitude toward the war as shown in Punch, were especially intelligent. In every case the aim was to show what the paper stood for. Considerable attention was paid to the qualities shown in the editorials — clearness, force, fairness; to the type of contributed articles and of foreign correspondence; to the excellence of the book reviews; and last, but perhaps not least interesting, to the advertisements of important books.

III. IV. For the third and fourth lessons — these in connection with paragraphing in compositions — the girls studied the editorials, "the leaders" of The Nation. They found that men who, today, want to make a point clearly and forcibly, state at, or near, the beginning of the paragraph what they are going to talk about, that they then discuss the topic in orderly fashion, and that, at the end of the paragraph, they make a definite statement, bringing their ideas together. Further, they found that sentences were welded by connecting words and phrases and that the thought of every paragraph could be summed up in one sentence. Two lessons were spent in outlining, summarizing, and reproducing — orally — these editorial paragraphs.



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All this work, which was, of course, a review of the principles of rhetoric already studied, was immediately turned to use in the compositions, both oral and written. The girls criticized each other for the structure of their themes, the orderliness and clearness with which ideas were presented, for the effectiveness with which subject matter was massed.

V. The fifth lesson was a study of the monthly magazine. Each girl made a study of *The Atlantic Monthly* and of one other magazine. Again the contents were classified, according to type: the essay, religious, literary, social, etc; fiction; poetry; etc.; any types of which magazines made a specialty — reminiscences or biographies, for example, were mentioned. Finally each girl summarized briefly one article which interested her.

VI. Recently we have turned to the magazines to help us in writing stories. This was our sixth lesson. We had previously read stories by such widely different writers as Rudyard Kipling, Sarah Orne Jewett, and O. Henry. Then the class hunted through magazines, each girl bringing one story which she considered especially good, one which she thought especially poor. Situations, beginnings, endings, methods of characterization, use of descriptive and explanatory matter, atmosphere, were touched on. This comprises the work actually done.

VII. In a week or two we shall have one or two talks on the making of a great newspaper — the collection of news, the division of work, etc., etc. Some year I hope to be able to take my class through a newspaper office.

Of course work like this is not thorough or complete. It is not meant to be, but it seems to have served a useful purpose. It has introduced girls to newspapers and magazines and shown them how to read them a little more intelligently. It has shown them what to skip or pass over lightly, what to read carefully and to weigh. It has made the girls, to a slight degree at least, more discriminating and appreciative. It has made them feel that the time-honoured principles of writing so elaborately discoursed on by teachers and makers of rhetorics, and so frequently illustrated by wearisome references to the classics, are, strange as it may seem, the principles, which consciously or unconsciously, good writers actually use today — in fact, the very principles that anyone who thinks straight and expresses himself clearly and forcibly, must use. In other words, newspapers and magazines are not substitutes for Addison and Burke; they are rather a link between modern school children and dead geniuses —

they are the work of infinitely more skilful fellow workmen. There are, of course, other, and more interesting, possibilities — the possibility of stimulating discussion of editorial opinions, of encouraging intelligent reading which challenges, and does not slavishly accept, the ideas of others.

It seems to me, then, that in secondary schools the study of magazines and newspapers is not to be substituted for the study of literature, and not to be over emphasized, but that it may be a useful and practical assistant in teaching boys and girls to read intelligently and to write clearly.

ELIZABETH A. DYKE.

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## MY EXPERIENCE WITH NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

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MRS. CAROLINE H. MILLS

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The Newton High School

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Some concession should be made in our class-rooms, to the fact that children relegate to the dark ages all literature produced before they were born; all time before their own entrance into the world is ancient. This was brought to me with a shock when my own little girl once said, "Mother, did they do this, in the *olden* days when you went to school?" To account for the difficulty which pupils have in placing Dickens, Shakespeare, Addison and others in their proper periods, I asked a class whether one century seemed nearer than another. The pupils confessed that there was little difference in their minds between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that Shakespeare seemed as near as George Eliot. All, therefore, are equally dim, and only passively interesting. A girl will look at her great grandmother's gown with a certain admiration, she will finger it reverently, fold and lay it away carefully; but how different is her attitude toward the gown in the dressmaker's hands, designed for herself! her interest there is vital. Gardner, a schoolboy, said the other day, "People say that we are living in a great age, that the world is making history — why can't we study and understand what is going on now — *that* is going to affect our lives — but instead they make us learn what the Greeks and Romans did."

My Scientific Freshmen had been studying Bryant's poems for some weeks: "Sella," "The Little People of the Snow," "Thanatopsis," the patriotic and even the bird poems,



they worked upon with very good grace, but when we reached the "Yellow Violet," the attitude of the boys gave me to understand that such poems might be good reading for classics, but did not suit the scientific mind, and that they would like something more in their line. It was time for a change, and the enthusiasm with which my proposition to study the current number of *The World's Work* was received, showed that the change was welcome.

The boys willingly furnished themselves with copies of the magazine. Our first article was a review of President Wilson's two years' administration. The principal bills passed by Congress were discussed; the principles of the three political parties in our country; and many topics connected with our form of government. Then followed war articles: one, the story of an American newspaper correspondent captured by the French; this was compared with an account in *Scribner's* of the experiences of Richard Harding Davis, arrested by the Germans. A comparison of the English in these two articles was good study for the boys; to their surprise they found mistakes made by the writer in *The World's Work* which they could correct; some rather long sentences were without punctuation. The sentence,—*"It was a horrible place I found myself in,"* was caught up, tossed about the class and freed from its lack of emphasis and conciseness. While they were more or less elated, however, over the fact that they could correct his English, they felt a little disloyal to the correspondent, for they liked him. One said, "I think it is a little more interesting not to have the English too good," another, "How could he write perfect English with the shells flying all around him?"

"What shall we read now, boys" I said before giving the next assignment. "John Bunny" came the answer from almost every one. They knew him well, and liked him too, this Coquelin of the movies, and because he was *real* to them they studied with interest all literary and dramatic references, fifteen of them, learned many definitions of new words and wrote spelling lessons from the text. They gave oral themes without knowing it and wrote a theme on "What Moving Pictures Mean to Me". A few of the comments are significant: "The pictures of current events are always true, because they are *taken*, and you can believe them, while you can't believe newspapers." "I like to see a real exciting and hair-breadth story." "I like to have the privilege of seeing movies like *David Copperfield*. If anybody had a heart, it surely would shed tears for poor David."

"The war pictures impressed me with the *awful* desolation: whole villages destroyed: this makes me think how fine a universal peace would be".

Interest has been defined as "involuntary attention". Involuntary attention these boys are giving their English, and I am told that this is *twice* as good as Bryant, and am asked "Can't we take newspapers, like the Sophomores?" During this study the boys have conducted the class almost entirely, a leader for each recitation having been appointed the day before.

The Classical Sophomores had spent the usual time upon Schurz's Essay on Lincoln, the Bunker Hill Oration and the Farewell Address. We tried to give these a present day interest by discussion of appropriate current events. Washington's foreign policy was, of course, amply justified by Europe's present troubles. The defense of the present foreign policy of our government by Lord Bryce and his allusion to Washington's advice, was a helpful tie between the past and present.

A reference to the shipping bill, one day, disclosed the fact that not one child in the two divisions, or about fifty-five pupils, had heard of it. Since the children had been naturally led to the study of current topics, this seemed the right time to make a sharp turn in the long road between Christmas and Easter. We chose the Boston Evening Transcript of a certain Saturday evening for our text-book. All the class studied this paper through the seven school days spent upon it. Each day's lesson was devoted to one or more departments. The class was divided into committees which took charge of the various departments; foreign, domestic, and local news, editorials, cartoons, advertising, and others. It was the duty of each member of these committees to bring to the class interesting items from other papers concerning their own departments. For instance, the committee on editorials reported articles by editors of other Boston, some New York papers, and some weekly magazines, as the Outlook and The Literary Digest. The committee on business explained bonds, preferred and common stock, and gave advice about investments, explained also reserve, national, co-operative, and savings banks, and trust companies. The group on advertising gave us an insight into the psychology and the expense of carrying on business today. He who had charge of cartoons brought them from foreign as well as domestic papers. Oral themes were constantly given without embarrassment. Word study



was necessary to understand the subjects. Editorial and other written work was required, and the two divisions united their forces to join in a debate. From the many comments made upon the work, as the class passed my desk to deposit their well-thumbed Transcripts in the waste-basket, I quote a few: "I have learned to handle a large newspaper, to find from the index the sections, pages and columns." "I can discuss the war now with older people." "I liked the study of advertisements almost best." "I can grasp these topics; I believe because they are more interesting." "I have learned a lot about international law." "I see now how to quickly get the essential points from an article." This class is now reading one of the magazines. This is giving an opportunity to study some current poetry: it puts before the pupils entirely different styles of composition: one article gives an example of strong, vigorous, but not particularly polished, English: a story offers the study of dialect: a serial by Galesworthy suggests the names and works of the more prominent English novelists of today and provokes discussion as to why they write for the best literary magazines, while some favorites of the class are not admitted to their pages.

This is a good study and I believe that all pupils should give some time to it. In order to do so some authors must be omitted from the year's program. Again I have turned to my class for suggestions. Since they were sophomores they could advise only for the first and second years. They were extremely earnest and thoughtful as they made the decision that Bracebridge Hall and *some* of the Twice Told Tales be omitted from the first year: Webster and Poe from the second. In one division only one voice was raised in favor of Poe; a girl who expects to devote her life to music said, "It seems a pity to lose the 'Bells.'"

For scientific and general divisions even more radical changes might be made.

There are dangers, however, both to teacher and pupil. The many class exercises which periodical literature suggests are likely to lure us on until we say with Irving, "We are too much engrossed by the story of the present to think of the characters and anecdotes that give interest to the past, and each age is a volume thrown aside to be speedily forgotten." This, of course, must not be; the study of current literature in the English class-room must be used to vitalize that of the past. Gardner should study ancient history, but that study should not be to him the dead body

of the past. That space between the time when he was not, and the time when he *was* — and life really began for the world — should be spanned by a bridge so constructed that every arch is of interest to him.

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### EDITORIAL NOTES

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*The English Leaflet is published by the New England Association of Teachers of English, every month except July, August, and September. Subscription price, One Dollar. Entered as second class matter May 1, 1914, at the postoffice at Boston, Mass., under the act of March 3, 1879.*

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At the March meeting the New England Association of Teachers of English discussed the use of newspapers and magazines in the English class-room.

The first speaker, Dallas Lore Sharp, classed this use of magazines in composition courses as a legitimate attempt to link academic rhetoric with present day interests. The best magazine articles, he said, rival the conventional "book of selections" in furnishing types for criticism and study of form. The "selected extracts from best authors," like a box of candied fruit, taste exactly alike to the student. The average freshman cannot distinguish the style of Pater from the style of Ruskin: each is hopelessly remote from his own probable self expression. In a current number of a good magazine, on the other hand, the student finds articles that have been in recent competition, written by living men, the work of fellow craftsmen. Here he dares to criticise, to distinguish degrees of merit, to discover tricks of the trade. Professor Sharp voiced the peculiar melancholy that attends all effort to "teach writing". Can we expect to do it after all? We can, he said, teach our pupils the use of *shall* and *will* and *this* and *that*; we can teach them to follow in their writing the outline of the colored pastor: "First I tells 'em what I's gwine tell 'em. Then I tells 'em what I is tellin' 'em. Then I tells 'em what I done tole 'em". And by the use of current literary models we may perhaps stimulate some students to look upon creative writing as a legitimate modern interest, a keen source of pleasure, a possible life work.



Mr. Dow of New Bedford spoke of his recent experiments with magazines in a class of boys. He pointed out the fact that the average boy thinks of Milton and Macaulay as equally remote from the present life of human beings. In his own work he had found *The Atlantic Monthly* most successful. Interest in such modern poets as Masfield and Noyes had been awakened.

Discussion followed. How shall we get the magazines? Members who have tried the experiment reported that reduced rates of subscriptions are offered to schools. Classes are found ready to buy the five cent number of *The Outlook*, for example, and then, stimulated by the interest of that study, to buy the more expensive magazines. One school treats magazine study entirely as outside work. A list of thirty approved periodicals is posted. A different one is read and reported upon every month by each student.

One member of the Association then expressed her doubt as to the wisdom of this modern search for something new. Are we growing frivolous? Does the Philistine attitude of the modern school-boy need encouragement? Are we ourselves to admit the remoteness of Macaulay and Ruskin from tomorrow's theme? In response to this, it was urged that English teachers are in little danger of running to extremes in magazine study. Time forbids. Conventional as we are in habit and curriculum, the magazine experiment will rarely be overdone.

The program concluded with an address on the *Editor as Schoolmaster* by Hamilton Holt, the editor of *The Independent*. He spoke most encouragingly of the effort which his magazine is making to fulfill the demand of the schools. By co-operation between Editor and Schoolmaster much may be accomplished.

The papers read by Miss Dike and Mrs. Mills are printed in full.

F. L. W.

The officers elected at the last meeting of the Association are:

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The members of the Association and Professor Black have been mutually honored by his services as president. He has made a happy presiding officer and has given ungrudgingly of his time and ability. We thank him most heartily.

In the same spirit of heartiness we welcome his successor — Mr. Geo. H. Browne, of the Browne and Nichols School. To no single individual in our Association are we more deeply indebted. Active as one of the founders, he was for years our secretary, treasurer, and editor, and has constantly remained in the inner councils of the Association. We honor ourselves in honoring him, and we share the enthusiasm that his presence habitually brings.

#### A WORD TO DELINQUENTS

Are you one of those who failed to send in your subscription in March? And have you every reproved a pupil for being delinquent with his themes? You have chided him for irresponsibility. Are you going to invite a similar chiding from Secretary-Treasurer Hersey? Our printer submits his bill regularly — and it's a large one. The United States government demands prepayment of postage on the *Leaflet*, and this demand is not to be gainsaid. Furthermore, are you inviting your English-teaching friends to our monthly spreads? We're growing, but we're not growing fast enough. We can make our Association the greatest single force in the improvement of English teaching in New England. Will you remove every handicap and push hard?

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, Etc., of the *English Leaflet*, published monthly except July, August, and September at Newtonville, Boston, Mass.

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Known Bondholders, None.

(signed) CHARLES SWAIN THOMAS, *Editor*.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 13th day of March, 1915.

WM. T. HALLIDAY, *Notary Public*.

(Seal.)

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## An Invitation to Teachers of English

You are cordially invited to join The New England Association of Teachers of English.

The purpose of this organization is "to advance the study and teaching of the English language and literature."

Regular meetings of the Association are held in December and March, usually in Boston, occasionally elsewhere. Reports of the papers read and of discussions are printed and mailed to members. Probably the most valuable feature of the Association is the *Leaflet* which is sent to all members every month from October to June inclusive.

Any teacher of English, or any one interested in the teaching of English, may become a member of the Association by paying the annual membership fee of one dollar to the treasurer. This includes subscription to the *Leaflet*. A large increase in membership will help to spread the influence of the Association. We shall be glad to have you join now — the beginning of our fiscal year.

Yours very truly,

F. W. C. HERSEY.

*Secretary-Treasurer.*

17 Lawrence Hall,  
Cambridge, Mass.